

Report on Miscellaneous Estimates

supply, but I wanted to make this narrow observation at this time on this point that confronts Your Honour.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, because the point of order seems to me to be so clear, I shall take only a minute or two of the time of the House. I refer to the basic point of order that is before us, namely, as to whether or not a standing committee of the House can propose an amendment to a money vote which alters its purpose in any way.

Without reading it in full, I draw attention to citation 250(4) of Beauchesne, on page 216 of his fourth edition, which reads:

The fundamental terms of a money resolution submitted to the House with the Governor-General's recommendation—

and so on

—cannot be amended.

Then I also draw attention to the important words in citation 246(3) on page 207, part of which says that once a financial initiative has been indicated it lays down once and for all the conditions about that charge. Then, I quote specifically these words:

In relation to the standard thereby fixed, an amendment infringes the financial initiative of the Crown, not only if it increases the amount, but also if it extends the objects and purposes, or relaxes the conditions and qualifications expressed in the communication by which the Crown has demanded or recommended a charge.

That citation goes on to say that, of course, a minister could move for a change, but in doing so he would have to secure the Royal recommendation. All in all, Mr. Speaker, because Your Honour raised some question about this the other day from the Chair, and in view of the points raised by the hon member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), it seems to me that the case is so clear that one does not need to argue that the change proposed by the committee is not within its competence.

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, to add to the unanimity of opinion, I wish to make a reference to Standing Order 58 as decided upon by this House in December, 1968. I draw particular attention to Standing Order 58(4) which refers to the requirement that written notice shall be given in dealing with estimates. I think there is some importance to be attached to the recital in that section of the various acts that must be preceded by notice, that is, a motion to concur in estimates, or a motion

to restore or reinstate any item in the estimates. Again, looking at paragraph (10) of the same Standing Order, we also have a reference to the motion to concur in, or a motion to reinstate any item in the estimates. From that, and in the light of the citation cited by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), I would argue that it is not within the power of the Standing Committees, when they are considering either final supplementary estimates or main estimates on an order from the House, to do anything other than concur in or reject those estimates.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Or to reduce them.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Or to reduce them. In particular, I would argue that the proposal put forward in the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates would not be in order because there is not the additional recommendation from the Crown with regard to these particular items.

I submit that the standing committees in exercising their scrutiny of the estimates can do no more and no less than the committee of supply could have done before the amendments to the Standing Orders, and therefore that this section of the committee's report is not in order. On that basis, while it can be said that the opportunities for members of the standing committees have greatly increased, because they have the opportunity of examining both the minister and his officials and at greater length than was the case previously, the actual juridical effect of their examination can be no more and no less than was the case with the old committee of supply, that is to say, either to adopt the estimates, reduce them or reject them altogether. I would say that is confirmed by the Standing Orders when we changed them in December, 1968, indicating the very limited number of ways in which estimates could be changed.

I might indicate that after consultation with the Table the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) put forward a motion, which is the third item under Order No. 1 on today's Order Paper, and I quote:

Consideration of a motion of the President of the Treasury Board concerning Votes 17b (Department of Agriculture) and 36b (Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce) of Supplementary Estimates (B) for 1969-70.

I should make it clear that this was put forward only out of an abundance of caution, in the event that the committee report was